Optimum Utilisation of Refineries

*298. SHRI RAJKUMAR DHOOT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the public sector oil refineries are not being utilized at the optimum level due to import of petroleum products rather than the crude oil:

(b) what has been the capacity utilization of public sector refineries during the last three years; and

(c) the steps being taken to utilize capacity of the refinery at optimum level?

THE MINISTER OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI RAM NAIK): (a) No, Sir.

(b) The capacity utilization of public sector refineries during the year 1999-2000, 2000-2001 and 2001-2002 has been 98%, 94% and 94% respectively.

(c) The capacity utilization is mainly lower in the North East refineries due to insufficient availability of Assam crude. Steps have been taken to allocate 1.5 million metric tonnes (MMT) of Ravva crude to Bongaigaon Refinery and Petrochemicals Limited, thus improving the overall availability of crude oil to the North East refineries.

Excise duty on bicycle parts

*299. SHRI RAVULA CHANDRA SEKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether bicycle industry in the country has opposed 4 per cent excise duty levied on bicycle manufacturing;

(b) whether the sale of bicycles in the country has gone down as a result of imposition of duty; and

(c) if so, the details of steps Government propose to take to improve the situation?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Sales of bicycles by the major bicycle manufactures during March to November 2002, as compared to corresponding period of previous year, has shown only a marginal increase.

(c) Government have exempted excise duty on bicycles with effect from 1.3.2003.

Impact of river discharge in the coastal water

*300. SHRI A. VIJAYA RAGHAVAN: Will the Minister of WATER RESOURCES be pleased to state:

(a) whether any task force on the linking of rivers is constituted/to be constituted;

(b) if so, the details including the task assigned and the period allotted;

(c) whether his Ministry has ruled out the idea of Ganga-Cauvery link, as it is unworkable;

(d) if so, the details including the other attempts of inter river basin transfers that had been ruled by the competent authority;

(e) whether any studies on the impact of river discharge on the coastal waters and fishery resources were attempted in the light of the linking of river;

(f) if so, the details thereof; and

(g) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF WATER RESOURCES (SHRI ARJUN CHARAN SETHI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The Central Government has set-up a Task Force on Interlinking of Rivers under the Chairmanship of Shri Suresh Prabhu, Member Parliament (Lok Sabha) on December, 13, 2002 with the following term of reference:—

(i) Provide guidance on norms of appraisal of individual projects in respect of economic viability, socio-economic impacts, environmental impacts and preparation of resettlement plans;

(ii) Devise suitable mechanism for bringing about speedy consensus amongst the States;